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Peculiarities of the comparative-historical development of the riddle genre

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Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada topishmoqlarning qiyosiy-tarixiy rivojlanishining o‘ziga xos xususiyatlari tadqiq etiladi. Turli xalqlar folklorida topishmoq janrining shakllanishi, taraqqiyoti va janriy xususiyatlarining o‘zgarishi qiyosiy-tarixiy yondashuv asosida tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, topishmoqlarning mazmun-mohiyati, obrazlar tizimi, badiiy ifoda vositalari hamda xalqning tarixiy tajribasi, turmush tarzi va madaniy qadriyatlari bilan bog‘liqligi yoritiladi. Maqolada topishmoq janrining tarixiy taraqqiyoti xalq tafakkuri va madaniy xotiraning muhim ko‘rinishi sifatida baholanadi.
Kalit so‘zlar: topishmoq, folklor, qiyosiy-tarixiy tadqiqot, janr, xalq og‘zaki ijodi, obraz, lingvomadaniyat, milliy-madaniy xususiyatlar.

Аннотация. В данной статье исследуются особенности сравнительно-исторического развития загадок. На основе сравнительно-исторического подхода анализируются формирование и развитие жанра загадки в фольклоре различных народов, а также изменения его жанровых особенностей. Кроме того, освещаются содержание и сущность загадок, система образов, художественно-выразительные средства, а также их связь с историческим опытом народа, его образом жизни и культурными ценностями. Историческое развитие жанра загадки рассматривается как важное проявление народного мышления и культурной памяти.
Ключевые слова: загадка, фольклор, сравнительно-историческое исследование, жанр, устное народное творчество, образ, лингвокультура, национально-культурные особенности.

Abstract. This article examines the specific features of the comparative-historical development of riddles. The formation and development of the riddle genre in the folklore of different peoples, as well as changes in its generic and genre characteristics, are analyzed through a comparative-historical approach. The article also highlights the content and essence of riddles, their system of imagery, artistic and expressive devices, and their relationship with the historical experience, way of life, and cultural values of the people. The historical development of the riddle genre is considered as an important manifestation of folk thought and cultural memory.
Keywords: riddle, folklore, comparative-historical study, genre, oral folk literature, imagery, linguoculture, national and cultural characteristics.
Research Methods: The study employed comparative-historical, descriptive-analytical, and comparative-typological methods. The materials selected for analysis included scholarly studies on the riddle genre, ancient written sources, and materials relating to the folklore of Uzbek, Turkic, and other peoples. These sources were examined to investigate the historical development, structural characteristics, and national-cultural aspects of riddles.

Introduction:

The riddle is both a national and an international genre. The riddles of every nation are unique works that reflect its way of life and living conditions, while also serving as invaluable sources of history and knowledge. For centuries, riddles have been passed down from generation to generation. Under the influence of the passage of time, social development, and changing circumstances, various types of riddles have emerged, and the genre has continued to acquire new

forms. Regardless of their stage of development, riddles are found among all peoples. Although riddles resemble proverbs in form, their purposes differ: a riddle invites the listener to guess, whereas a proverb conveys a lesson or moral insight.[1]

Relevance of the study. The relevance of this study lies in the need for a comparative investigation of the formation and historical development of the riddle genre in the folklore of different peoples. Riddles are an important folklore genre that reflects a people's way of life, worldview, and cultural values.

Aim of the Study. The aim of this article is to analyse the historical development of the riddle genre on the basis of the folklore of different peoples and scholarly sources, and to identify its common generic features as well as its national and cultural characteristics. To achieve this aim, the study examines the representation of riddles in ancient sources, their forms among different peoples, and their structural characteristics.

In her monograph Uzbek Riddles, the first major scholarly study specifically devoted to this genre of Uzbek oral folklore, Z. Husainova describes the riddle as "the oldest and most widespread genre" of folklore[2]. In determining the generic nature of riddles, particular attention should first be paid to their capacity to enable the understanding of reality and to represent it figuratively. In our view, the distinctive feature of a riddle lies not simply in describing an object or phenomenon, but in conveying its essential characteristics in a concealed, figurative, and indirect manner, thereby leading the listener to arrive at an independent conclusion. The same scholarly source provides the following definition of a riddle: "A riddle is a literary genre that depicts reality realistically" [3].

M. A. Rybnikova, a scholar who conducted an in-depth study of Russian folk riddles, defines a riddle as follows: "A riddle apprehends and expresses a concrete object in the dialectics of its origin, function, and existence" [4]. This definition highlights a feature that distinguishes riddles considerably from other folklore genres. "A riddle consists of a question formulated as a simple, concise declarative sentence that requires an answer and conveys the object through its characteristic features. However, its distinctive artistic technique and figurative quality give it a special character by compelling the listener to think" [5]. According to Rybnikova, it is precisely this characteristic that makes a riddle "the key to the verbal image"[6].

Further definitions of riddles are also widely discussed in scholarly literature. Husainova describes the riddle as "one of the oldest and most enduring genres of folklore" [7]. In the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language, a riddle is defined as "a brief description of an object, phenomenon, or the like that is to be guessed, expressed through symbols and comparisons"[8]. The Russian ethnographer I. A. Khudyakov refers to the riddle as "a body of

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[1] Даль В. И.. Пословицы русского народа. Сборник пословиц, поговорок, речений, присловий, чистоговорок, загадок, поверий и проч. - М., 1862, и СПб., 1879;

[2] Husainova, Z. O'zbek topishmoqlari [Uzbek Riddles]. Tashkent: Fan, 1966, p. 3.
[3] Husainova, Z. O'zbek topishmoqlari [Uzbek Riddles]. Tashkent: Fan, 1966, p. 3.
[4] According to M. A. Rybnikova, a riddle is "the key to the verbal image, the seed of poetry, metaphor and oxymoron in their purest forms" [3, p. 22].
[5] Ibid., p. 6.
[6] According to M. A. Rybnikova, a riddle is "the key to the verbal image, the seed of poetry, metaphor and oxymoron in their purest forms" [3, p. 6].
[7] Husainova, Z. "Topishmoq terminlari" [Riddle Terminology]. *O'zbek tili va adabiyoti masalalari* [Issues of Uzbek Language and Literature], No. 3, Tashkent, 1960, p. 28. Cited in: Kuliyeva, D. A. *«Kodex Kumanikus» topishmoqlari tarjimalarining qiyosiy tahlili va poetikasi* [A Comparative Analysis and Poetics of Translations of Riddles in the Codex Cumanicus]. PhD dissertation in Philology, Namangan, 2024, p. 12.
[8] Madvaliev, A. *O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati. T harfi* [Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language. Letter T]. Tashkent: O'zbekiston Milliy Ensiklopediyasi, 2006–2008, p. 148. (Cited in: Kuliyeva, 2024, p. 15.)

knowledge about objects, a science of distinctions"[9]. In Western folkloristics, J. H. Brunvand defines riddles as "traditional questions with unexpected answers" [10].

A riddle is a structural unit consisting of two components: a figurative part and a guess[11]. These two components-the riddle and its answer or solution—are designated by corresponding terms in different languages: загадка and отгадка or решение in Russian; devinette and réponse or solution in French; and riddle and answer, clue, or solution in English. The origin, history, reasons for the emergence, and uses of riddles have been widely studied and debated in linguistics around the world.

According to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, a riddle is a well-constructed metaphor that expresses a truth by combining elements that are seemingly impossible[12]. A riddle consists of a brief, well-rhymed description of an object or phenomenon to be guessed. It contains both a question and an answer. In essence, the question incorporates the answer, but does so indirectly and implicitly. It presents the qualities of the object to be guessed, which must be identified through comparison and the recognition of similarities. Thus, a riddle may take the form of a metaphor, an allegory, a numerical designation, or other forms of figurative expression[13].

According to another source, the oldest known written riddles date back to the third millennium BCE. They were recorded on clay cuneiform tablets discovered in the city of Lagash in ancient Mesopotamia, in the territory of present-day Iraq [14]. According to A. B. Krivenko, the emergence of riddles in the countries of the Mediterranean dates back to the first millennium BCE, whereas in ancient Egyptian culture, riddles appeared as early as the third millennium BCE. The emergence of authored riddles, meanwhile, is dated to approximately the seventh century BCE[15].

According to the children's folklore scholar V. P. Anikin, in ancient times, knowing a special form of "secret" speech was an obligation intended to ensure prosperity for individuals and their families. Such knowledge was essential in hunting, everyday life, and interactions with other people[16]. Indeed, the Russian folklorist traces the origins of riddles to the beliefs of fishermen and ploughmen, the secret language of herders and hunters, taboos, and distinctive ways of speaking [17]. Following the Mesopotamian period, the riddle genre also appeared in the literatur of other ancient peoples, including biblical texts and the mythological epics of various cultures [18].

The riddle genre is not confined to European and Slavic peoples; it has also existed since ancient times within other major linguistic and cultural traditions around the world. In Chinese literary studies, the riddle genre has a long history and reached a mature artistic form during the

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[9] Khudyakov, I. A. *Etnograficheskiy sbornik Russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva* [Ethnographic Collection of the Russian Geographical Society]. Issue VI, p. 21. (Cited in: Kuliyeva, 2024, p. 15.)

[10] Brunvand J.H. Bilmecelerve Diğer Sözlü Bulmacalar (çev. Kadriye Türkan) // Millî Folklor. - S. 74, 2007. - S. 137-143 (Кулиева, 2024, 15-бет орқали келтирилган).

[11] Köngäs-Maranda, E. "Logika zagadok" [The Logic of Riddles]. In: Paremiological Collection: Proverb. Riddle (Structure, Meaning, Text). Moscow: Nauka, 1978, pp. 249–282.

[12] Aristotle. Rhetoric / with an English translation by J.H. Freese. - Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library), 1926. - III, 1405a; Aristotle. Poetics / with an English translation by W.H. Fyfe. - Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library), 1932. - 1458a.

[13] Aristotel. Ko'rsatilgan asar. Ritorika, III kitob, 1405a; Poetika, 1458a.

[14] Biggs, R. D. "Pre-Sargonic Riddles from Lagash." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 1973, vol. 32, nos. 1-2, pp. 26-33. https://doi.org/10.1086/372217.

[15] Krivenko, A. B. "K voprosu ob enigmaticheskom variante aforisticheskogo teksta" [On the Enigmatic Variant of the Aphoristic Text]. In: *Issledovaniya v oblasti balto-slavyanskoy dukhovnoy kul'tury. Zagadka kak tekst 2* [Studies in Baltic-Slavic Spiritual Culture: The Riddle as Text 2]. Moscow: Indrik, 1999, p. 133.

[16] Anikin, V. P. *Russkie narodnye poslovitsy, pogovorki, zagadki i detskiy fol'klor* [Russian Folk Proverbs, Sayings, Riddles, and Children's Folklore]. Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1957, p. 56.

[17] Anikin, V. P. *Russkie narodnye poslovitsy, pogovorki, zagadki i detskiy fol'klor* [Russian Folk Proverbs, Sayings, Riddles, and Children's Folklore]. Op. cit., p. 56.

[18] *Literaturnaya entsiklopediya terminov i ponyatiy* [Literary Encyclopedia of Terms and Concepts]. 2001, p. 271.

Warring States period (475–221 BCE) [19]. In addition, the Chinese xiehouyu-folk expressions with metaphorical and explanatory structures, typically consisting of two parts-have become a distinct subject of lexicographic research [20].

In Japanese tradition, a type of riddle known as nazokake, which relies on homonymy and multiple meanings, is widespread and continues to be actively studied in contemporary linguistics[21]. Riddles have also been investigated as an important genre performing social and cultural functions in African oral traditions, including among the Busoga people of Uganda [22].

The Codex Cumanicus was compiled in 1294-1295 in the settlement of Solkhat in Crimea, now known as Stary Krym, on the basis of linguistic materials recorded by Italian and German missionaries from Turkic communities speaking Kipchak dialects. This work, which contains approximately 1,300 words from the Old Kipchak language, comprises two main sections: a Latin-Persian-Cuman (Kipchak) dictionary and a Cuman (Kipchak)–German dictionary. The original manuscript is currently held in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, where it is catalogued under the number DXLIX (No. 549) and kept under shelfmark No. 1597 [23].

The Codex Cumanicus manuscript is a unique source containing riddles, one of the oldest genres of oral folklore. It includes 47 of the earliest known Turkic riddles created by our ancestors

This demonstrates that the riddle is not an accidental phenomenon but a typologically universal genre that has developed independently within the intellectual traditions of different peoples. Consequently, the similarities between French and Uzbek folk riddles cannot be explained solely by historical contacts or cultural influence; some of their shared features may also be understood as manifestations of universal patterns of human cognition and thought.

Numerous scholarly studies in international folkloristics have examined the distinctive characteristics of riddles as a folklore genre, the principles by which reality is represented through metaphorical language, the classification of riddles, their structural and semantic nature, and their artistic features. Particular attention has been paid to identifying the place of riddles, which exist in the folklore of virtually all peoples of the world, within the system of folklore genres, as well as to the patterns governing their poetic transformation. In her study of Finnish folk riddles, Elli Köngäs-Maranda, a folklorist and paremiologist and a professor at the University of Vancouver, Canada, examined the transformation of structural models in folklore. She identified a connection between the historical origins of the tradition of posing riddles and finding their answers and the symbolic-ritual utterances associated with marriage ceremonies in ancient times. Köngäs-Maranda also developed a classification of riddles based on the criteria of emotional, individual, and informational puzzles[24].

The two-volume scholarly study entitled Riddle as Text (Zagadka kak tekst), published in the series Studies in Baltic-Slavic Spiritual Culture (Issledovaniya v oblasti balto-slavyanskoy dukhovnoy kul'tury), focuses on the pragmatics of the riddle genre. The study examines the

[19] Chan, T. W. K. "A New Reading of an Early Medieval Riddle: 'Utterly Wonderful, Lovely Words'?" *T'oung Pao*, 2013, vol. 99, nos. 1–3, pp. 53–87. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685322-9913P0002.

[20] Rohsenow, J. S. *A Chinese-English Dictionary of Enigmatic Folk Similes (Xiehouyu).* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991.

[21] Terai, A., Yamashita, K., and Komagamine, S. "Computer Humor and Human Humor: Construction of Japanese 'Nazokake' Riddle Generation Systems." *Journal of Advanced Computational Intelligence and Intelligent Informatics*, 2020, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 199–205. https://doi.org/10.20965/jaciii.2020.p0199.

[22] Cornelius, W. G. *Riddle Performance and Societal Discourses: Lessons from Busoga*. PhD thesis, Makerere University, 2012, p. 312.

[23] Jafarov, B. *"Kodeks Kumanikus" — qadimgi turkiy obida* [The Codex Cumanicus: An Ancient Turkic Monument]. Tashkent: Bayoz, 2017, p. 6. (Cited in: Kuliyeva, D. A. *A Comparative Analysis and Poetics of Translations of Riddles in the Codex Cumanicus*. PhD dissertation in Philology, Namangan, 2024, p. 22.)

[24] Köngäs-Maranda, E. "The Logic of Riddles." Translated from English by N. Kuzmina. In: Paremiological Collection: Proverb, Riddle (Structure, Meaning, Text). Moscow: Nauka, 1978, pp. 249–281.

genesis, structure, semiotics, and linguopoetic features of Slavic riddles, linguistic models of riddle texts, their typology, and their comparative-typological relationship with other genres [25].

In Western folkloristics, the systematic scholarly study of riddles emerged as a distinct field during the twentieth century. Although the riddle genre became a separate object of research relatively late in the development of folkloristics, a consistent and systematic approach to its study began to take shape in European scholarship in the nineteenth century. In twentieth-century Western folkloristics, the systematic study of riddles is closely associated with Archer Taylor, who focused primarily on the folklore traditions of America and Europe and conducted extensive research on the riddle genre. In particular, Taylor's studies of English folk riddles established an important methodological foundation for analysing the genre through national and thematic classification[26]. In his approach, riddles are regarded as products of oral tradition, with their stability, transmission and adaptation over time, and anonymous authorship recognised as key generic characteristics. Taylor's work made a significant contribution to the structural and historical analysis of riddles, proverbs, and other forms of folklore. The American scholar defines a riddle as a unit of oral discourse constructed around one or more descriptive elements and requiring the listener to identify the answer[27]. According to Taylor, the logical and semantic discrepancy between the question and the answer engages the listener in an active process of reasoning.

Major scholarly works devoted to folklore genres, particularly riddles, in Western folkloristics have been produced by A. Taylor, A. Orchard, R. A. Georges, D. Bitterli, D. P. Joseph, J. Black, J. Neville, J. Paz, L. K. Shook, Ph. Cousineau, P. J. Murphy, H. Price, F. J. Child, K. Thomas, S. Edmunds, T. A. Green, V. Hull, and W. G. Cornelius [28].

Extensive and detailed research on this subject has also been conducted in Russian folkloristics. The emergence and history of riddles, their classification according to their use among the people, and their linguocultural, sociopragmatic, lexical, and semantic features have been investigated in the works of prominent folklorists and scholars, including A. A. Rizhenkova, A. B. Krivenko, M. V. Volkova, N. I. Fayzulinna, O. N. Govorkova, O. V. Magirovskaya, S. S. Kondrasheva, S. Ya. Senderovich, T. S. Kuznetsova, V. P. Anikin, V. V. Chernyshev, E. Köngäs-Maranda, and E. D. Yusupova.

In general, the practice of collecting riddles into separate collections and treating them as an independent genre emerged across different linguistic traditions. From the 1940s and 1950s onward, collections of national riddles began to be compiled in various countries, indicating that the riddle genre was becoming an independent object of scholarly investigation.

The communicative nature of riddles has received particular attention in Western pragmatic research[29]. The interaction between the person posing a riddle and the person attempting to solve it is dialogic in nature and involves an implicit dialogue. This process can be interpreted in relation to Roman Jakobson's model of communication.

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[25] Studies in Baltic-Slavic Spiritual Culture: Riddle as Text. Vol. 1. Moscow: Indrik, 1994. 270 pp.; Studies in Baltic-Slavic Spiritual Culture: Riddle as Text. Vol. 2. Moscow: Indrik, 1999. 189 pp.

[26] Taylor, A. English Riddles from Oral Tradition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 2–3.

[27] Taylor, A. English Riddles from Oral Tradition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951, pp. 2–3.

[28] Taylor, A. English Riddles from Oral Tradition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951; Orchard, Andy. "Enigma Variations: The Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Tradition." In: Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge. Edited by Andy Orchard and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe. 2 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005; Cornelius, W. G. Riddle Performance and Societal Discourses: Lessons from Busoga. PhD thesis, Makerere University, 2012, p. 312.

[29] Jakobson, R. "Linguistics and Poetics." In: Style in Language. Edited by T. A. Sebeok. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1960, pp. 350–377.

In Western scholarship, a riddle is primarily interpreted as a complex structural unit consisting of two components: a figurative image (devinette, contexte) and an answer (réponse, solution) [30]. It is noteworthy that two scholarly traditions that developed independently of one another-the Western tradition represented by Georges and Dundes, and the Slavic tradition represented by Köngäs-Maranda-arrived at the same two-component structural model. This convergence suggests that the combination of a figurative component and an answer is not accidental, but rather a typological feature of the riddle as a universal genre.

The semantic and logical relationship between these two components constitutes the principal cognitive mechanism of a riddle. The question-like context prompts the listener to activate existing knowledge and identify the hidden meaning through figurative and logical reasoning. From this perspective, a riddle is not merely a form of entertainment but also a linguistic phenomenon with intellectual and educational significance.

American folklorists Robert A. Georges and Alan Dundes interpret the riddle primarily as an independent unit of folklore based on a semantic contrast between the question and the answer [31]. In their article entitled "Toward a Structural Definition of the Riddle," they attempt to identify and analyse the riddle genre through structural analysis. The scholars seek to define riddles as traditional oral expressions based on one or more "descriptive elements" (éléments descriptifs). This approach makes it possible to identify riddles not only in terms of their content but also in terms of their structure, establishing the principal features that distinguish them from other forms of oral folklore.

On this basis, Western scholars generally distinguish between two types of riddles: (1) a descriptive riddle (une devinette descriptive) and (2) a witty question (une question spirituelle). This classification represents one approach to the analysis of riddles in international folkloristics.

Russian researchers, however, do not consider this classification exhaustive [32]:

1. Descriptive riddles metaphorically depict an animal, a human being, a plant, or an object. In such riddles, two or more meanings intersect or come into conflict[33].

2. Witty questions constitute a second type of riddle that requires the logical interpretation of a particular statement. Arriving at the answer involves reasoning based on wordplay or sound play.

The riddle is regarded as one of the oldest and most enduring forms of folklore. As E. B. Tylor observes, riddles emerged at a period in the history of civilisation close to that of proverbs and coexisted with them for a long time, although they eventually developed along different paths[34]. The riddle genre is closely associated with the mythopoetic worldview, ritual and practical activities, and symbolic thinking characteristic of the early stages of human cultural development. In Western linguistics and folkloristics, riddles have been studied as a universal genre, with particular attention to their origins, functions, and structural characteristics.

Riddles and proverbs share several formal features, including concise expression, rhythmic organisation, and the use of rhyme. However, they differ in their communicative purposes: a riddle requires the listener to discover a concealed answer, whereas a proverb generally conveys an observation or lesson. Riddles and riddle-solving contests are also recurring motifs in folk epics

[30] Georges, R. A., and Dundes, A. "Toward a Structural Definition of the Riddle." The Journal of American Folklore, 1963, vol. 76, no. 300, pp. 111–118.
[31] Georges, R. A., and Dundes, A. Toward a Structural Definition of the Riddle. Previously cited work, pp. 113–114.
[32] Ryzhenkova, A. A., and Zakharevich, E. R. "Linguocultural Features of the English Riddle." Philological Aspect: International Scientific and Practical Journal. Nizhny Novgorod: Open Knowledge Research and Publishing Centre, 2021, no. 10 (78), p. 36.
[33] The Encyclopedia Americana. New York: Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1920. Entry: "Riddle."
[34] Tylor, E. B. Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom. Vol. 1. London: John Murray, 1871.

and in literary works influenced by epic traditions. "This specialised literature of questions and answers encompasses numerous works from all periods and cultures"[35].

In recent years, the study of riddles has extended beyond traditional philological approaches and has become a significant subject of research in cognitive linguistics and computational linguistics. In particular, the RiddleSense dataset, developed by B. Y. Lin and his co-authors, is designed to evaluate artificial intelligence models' ability to reason about riddles involving figurative thinking, linguistic creativity, and commonsense knowledge[36]. Such research sheds light on not only the literary and aesthetic dimensions of riddles but also their cognitive and pragmatic nature, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for the linguopragmatic analytical methodology employed in Chapter III of this study.

A closer examination of the approaches discussed above reveals that they do not treat the riddle as an identical object of study; rather, they examine it from different analytical perspectives. Aristotle approaches the riddle from the standpoint of rhetoric, viewing it as a phenomenon of artistic discourse and placing metaphor at its centre. From this perspective, the riddle is primarily an example of rhetorical skill. Georges and Dundes, by contrast, operate at an entirely different level-that of the internal structure of the text. Their primary concern is not what a riddle is about, but the formal relationship between its descriptive component and its answer. Consequently, their definition takes the form of a structural formula applicable across different languages and cultures. An approach based on Jakobson's model of communication operates on yet another level: it views the riddle not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as an act of playful communication between two participants-the person posing the riddle and the person solving it-in which the code, message, and receiver occupy central positions.

In our view, these differences do not constitute mutually exclusive contradictions; rather, they represent complementary perspectives that reveal different dimensions of the same phenomenon. Rhetorical, structural, communicative, and folkloristic approaches illuminate the riddle in terms of style, form, function, and mode of transmission, respectively. At the same time, the specific objective of the present study-to conduct a comparative analysis of the structural-semantic and linguopoetic features of French and Uzbek riddles-requires the selection of one of these approaches as the principal analytical framework. Accordingly, Georges and Dundes' structural definition is adopted as the point of departure for this research. Within this framework, a riddle is understood as a relatively stable, two-component structural unit consisting of a descriptive element and a referent that must be identified by the solver. The rationale for this choice is straightforward: unlike definitions based primarily on rhetoric or folkloristics, the structural definition is operational from a linguistic perspective. It enables a comparative analysis of material from the two languages by examining the relationship between the descriptive component and the answer in each language separately. Nevertheless, Aristotle's observations on figurative language and Jakobson's model of communication are not excluded from the study. They are retained as theoretical foundations and will be revisited, particularly in Chapter III, to illuminate the linguopragmatic nature of riddles.

The scope of the research discussed above, extending from Aristotle to contemporary computational linguistics, demonstrates the richness and multifaceted nature of riddle studies. At the same time, one aspect deserves attention: most existing comparative studies have been conducted either among genetically related languages (for example, English and Russian or

[35] "Riddle." The Great Russian Encyclopedia. Vol. 10. 2008, p. 159. Available at: https://old.bigenc.ru/literature/text/1985189

[36] Lin, B. Y., Wu, Z., Yang, Y., Lee, D.-H., and Ren, X. "RiddleSense: Reasoning about Riddle Questions Featuring Linguistic Creativity and Commonsense Knowledge." Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: ACL-IJCNLP 2021, pp. 1504–1515.

English and German within the Indo-European language family) or within a single language family, such as the Turkic languages.

Research results.

The analysis of scholarly sources indicates that the riddle genre has a long history and has developed in distinctive forms within the folklore traditions of different peoples. One of its key generic features is the indirect representation of an object or phenomenon through the figurative description of its characteristics rather than its direct naming.

The analysis also reveals that, alongside their common structural features, riddles reflect a people's historical experience, way of life, and cultural values through their imagery and content. The perspectives of various scholars further demonstrate the importance of examining riddles from artistic, structural, and communicative standpoints.

Results and discussion.

A comparison of scholarly approaches to riddles demonstrates the interrelationship between their artistic, structural, and communicative features. Aristotle focuses on the metaphorical nature of riddles, Georges and Dundes examine their structural organisation, while the communicative approach emphasises the relationship between the person posing a riddle and the listener attempting to solve it. These perspectives complement one another and make it possible to investigate the riddle genre from different angles.

Similarities between riddles in the folklore of different peoples may be associated with the human capacity to observe and compare phenomena in the surrounding world. Their distinctive features, in turn, are shaped by each people's historical experience and cultural environment. However, establishing the origins or transmission of particular riddles between peoples requires specific historical evidence.

Conclusion.

The riddle genre has existed in the folklore traditions of different peoples since ancient times and has developed in diverse forms and meanings throughout history. Its key characteristics include the figurative representation of objects and phenomena, the invitation to uncover hidden meanings, and the stimulation of the listener's thinking.

Comparative analysis reveals that riddles share common generic features while also exhibiting national and cultural particularities. These distinctive features are associated with a people's way of life, historical experience, and worldview. Thus, the historical and comparative study of riddles contributes to a deeper understanding of the development of human thought and cultural memory.

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